**Town Manager Update**

*October 10, 2023*

I assume the Select Board will have some remarks on the strategy session last week, so I will not mention much more about that now. Following up on one item from the strategy session, though, I asked the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority whether they had any on-demand service. They have that only for ADA needs, with customers needing prior authorization to use the service.

We received some excellent news today—for the first time, our OPEB funds equal slightly more than 100% of our liability. We are fully funded. That said, our internal goal is to have funds of 110% of our liability in order to hedge against market downturns. Also, we will have to continue investing as health care costs continue to rise. Still, this is a remarkable and rare achievement.

I have urged the Governor’s Office of Administration and Finance to move forward with the economic bond bill, which has funding for Town Hall and the Highway Garage, citing the need for an elevator in the Town Hall and roof (and wall) work in the Garage.

The Town was notified this morning that parking in the bank lot will no longer be allowed, effective tomorrow. I offered to negotiate a lease, which might take a Town Meeting vote, but have not heard back.

Meeting with our MIIA account representative last week, he thought our current value of $205,000 for IT equipment was low and suggested we get a better valuation, including the Dispatch department. I asked the Communications Director and our IT consultant to come up with current figures and found the equipment is worth from $530,000 to $560,000—more to insure, but we’ll be much better prepared should any of it fail.

The sewer feasibility study for Division Road is done. Options are between $1.7M and $2M. Both Bud and I would favor the $2M as being a simpler, gravity-fed system—the extra cost would be worth it in order to reduce the ongoing maintenance costs of a pressurized system.

Fuss and O’Neill are making progress on the design for Dalton Division Road, and are almost ready to present the first set of design alternatives to MassDOT. These include the intersection of Dalton Division Road with Williams Street—either a two-way stop or a roundabout—and for the road itself, either a single mixed-use lane for pedestrians and bicyclists on the west side of the street or smaller bike lanes with sidewalks on both sides of the street.

The Invitation for Bids for the heat pump system for the Town Garage will be published in the Central Register tomorrow, and I plan to have the Request for Proposals for the Walker Brook reconstruction published next week.

Dan Esko and I are scheduled to meet with the Open Space Committee on Thursday to talk about their support for a group to work on a skateboard park.

As part of the Financial Management Review I requested, representatives from the Department of Revenue visited the financial offices last week. They should be contacting Select Board members as well, and the chair of the Finance Committee, particularly around the budget process. I plan to move forward with a preliminary budget this year, for FY 2025, for earlier consideration and policy guidance, as it will take DOR some time to issue their report, but we should have a much more efficient process for FY 2026.